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ABSTRACT

Social scientists can make two different types of contributions to school desegregation. One of these is to continue to collaborate with lawyers and judges in the legal proceedings necessary to convert the desegregation ideal into reality. The other is to greatly increase their collaboration with educators to make desegregation a more positive experience for students. With respect to legal action, social scientists can: (1) help determine the responsibility of State-level agencies in metropolitan school segregation; (2) help prevent the inschool segregation effects of grouping; and (3) help the Courts tailor desegregation plans to lead to effective education. Social scientists can also help educators in the innovation of promising programs. Working with cooperating interracial groups is one such program. Various educators have shown that the institution of competing interracial teams in the classroom greatly influenced school achievement, race relations, and self esteem. Effective desegregation remains one of the best hopes of closing the gap between our egalitarian ideals and the mistreatment of minorities. (Author/RLV)

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

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Opportunities for Future Social Science Contributions

to School Desegregation

by Stuart W. Cook
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Our Chair has indicated that our celebration today of the 25th anniversary of the Supreme Court school desegregation decision will include not only a look back but a look forward. I will try my hand at what I suspect may be a very personal approach to the latter.

Let me begin by saying that in my opinion social scientists can make two quite different types of contributions to desegregation in the future. One of these is to continue to collaborate with lawyers and judges in the legal proceedings necessary to convert the desegregation ideal into reality. The other is to greatly increase our collaboration with educators to make desegregation a more positive experience for students.

In 1954 no one could have anticipated that 25 years later social scientists would still be working with the Courts regarding school desegregation. However, in the years following 1954 it gradually became clear that simply overturning state laws requiring school segregation and substituting unsegregated neighborhood schools instead, would leave most school segregation untouched. The reason was that in most school districts extensive residential segregation had developed and, as a result, the assignment of all children to schools in their own neighborhoods had little effect. The dilemma was--and continues to be--whether this residential segregation can be traced to earlier segregative actions by government. If so, those disadvantaged or damaged by the current effects of the segregated neighborhood schools that originated in these earlier actions have the

right to a remedy. This is equally true whether the segregative actions were mandated by law, as they had been in the South, or were administrative actions of school boards and other government units, as in the North and West.

As a result, social scientists were faced with an entirely new role in the desegregation campaign. Whereas earlier they had been asked for counsel regarding the negative effects of government-mandated segregation, social scientists now are asked for analyses concerning the part that the actions of official bodies have played in the historical origins of present-day segregation. For example, in the last court case in which I participated I was asked to discuss the effect of things like gerrymandered attendance boundaries, allowing white students to transfer from their integrated neighborhood schools to all white schools, selection of school sites that helped maintain segregation, concentrated assignment of black teachers to schools with black students, and so on. What I did, as other social scientists have done in similar cases, was to describe the way in which negative racial attitudes and associated social norms favoring segregation were probably strengthened by such events. I explained the attitudinal, normative and behavioral consequences for citizens who watched their community leaders engineer segregation. Among the behavioral consequences, of course, was choice of residence in segregated areas.

Judicial decision-making becomes more and more difficult as the push to desegregate resisting school districts in the North, Midwest, and West continues. The Supreme Court has recently reemphasized two points that highlight this difficulty. The first is that school segregation associated with residential segregation may be due partly to private factors such as economic status and partly to government-related causes such as school board actions. The second point is

that the Courts can order remedies only for the government-related causes since it is only such causes that represent Constitutional violations. Thus, the lower Courts must decide not only whether present-day segregation is a residue of past governmental actions but to what extent this is the case. Then the lower Courts must order a remedy in proportion to what the Supreme Court has called the "incremental segregative effect" of the government-related causes. This remedy may be system-wide desegregation, but it may be much more limited in scope.

Three other areas of desegregation proceedings exist in which the help of social scientists will be badly needed in the future. Let me say a word about each.

The first of the three has to do with future litigation with respect to metropolitan desegregation. The Supreme Court has gone on record twice recently as refusing to order desegregation across school district lines. This leaves several million children almost completely segregated, with the blacks in the core city and the whites in the suburban ring around it. We need only to recall the steady migration of the middle class from the city to suburbs to appreciate the magnitude of this phenomenon. From a historical cause-and-effect perspective, as a social scientist would see it, a recently established school district borderline is completely artificial. Metropolitan areas, like Tampa and Nashville, that are not burdened by separate city and suburban school districts have been successfully desegregated for some time. But from the Suprere Court's perspective the problem is a real one. Although severely divided on the issue the Court has ruled it cannot hold suburban school districts responsible for the segregative actions of the core city government. Moreover, it faces practical problems in

ordering a remedy that sometimes would require the coordination or merger of dozens of separate school boards.

What lies ahead for both social scientists and lawyers is an analysis of the responsibility of state-level agencies for what has happened. If through their regulation of local education they are shown to have actively or passively acquiesced in actions with segregative effects, the Courts may order the states to take responsibility for metropolitan desegregation.

The second of the three areas of future legal action is that involving resegregation within desegregated schools. For many years educators have used groupings according to ability and achievement to improve teaching effectiveness. In newly desegregated schools this method sometimes results in within-school segregation. Approaches are needed which retain both the advantages of desegregation and those of effective teaching of achievement-retarded children. To attain this, it is clear that educators, social scientists, and the Courts must work together.

The third area of future social science collaboration with the Courts has to do with tailoring desegregation plans in such a way as to lead to effective education. In big cities this is a task of almost unlimited complexity. Frequently, the most effective desegregation plan called for immediate and system-wide desegregation with the racial composition of each school approximating that of the school district. However, there may be other situations where such a plan is a guarantee of failure. Needless to say, this is a dangerous distinction to try to make, as it opens the door to bias and delay. Nevertheless, it is a distinction that must be made and one to which our contributions as social scientists are essential.

I would summarize these comments about collaborating with lawyers and the Courts in desegregation proceedings by stressing the magnitude and the significance of the opportunities ahead. I cannot help but compare this with the situation in 1954. The task that faced us then seemed formidable, but it was simple by comparison to the complexity and scope of the opportunities now available to us.

Now--on to the matter of collaboration with educators to enhance the constructive outcomes of school desegregation. First, I should make explicit the premise upon which my comments are based. This is that only a small fraction of the constructive potential of school desegregation has been realized. More often than not, the desegregation has been carried out reluctantly, with opposition and even hostility. Often the schools have not had the time and the resources to prepare for the change. Minority students have often entered predominantly white schools with school achievement handicaps that invited confirmation of negative stereotypes. Rarely, in fact, has desegregation occurred under circumstances that we social scientists believe to be conducive to favorable outcomes for the participating children.

In the last several years there have been excellent reviews of the many studies of school desegregation. The reviewers point out that few of these studies describe the actual conditions under which desegregation was carried out. Hence, we must assume that conditions varied from study to study and were unfavorable in many, if not most, of the cases. It is not surprising, therefore, that the results of the studies have been inconsistent. This is true whether the outcome evaluated was school achievement, self-esteem or race relations.

All of the reviewers have called attention to this inconsistency. Understandably when they have tried to discern a pattern in the findings, they have come to different conclusions. My own reading of the point of view most representative of their collective judgment would be that the overall effects of desegregation have been as follows: First, the school achievement of white children has been unaffected while that of black children has shown significant but undramatic gains. These gains have been most prevalent in the lower grades. Second, with respect to the self-esteem of black children, measurement and interpretation problems have made it impossible to determine whether or not changes have taken place which can be attributed to the desegregation experience. Third, as for such race relations indicators as racial interaction, cross-race friendships, respect and liking for schoolmates of the other race, and generalized racial attitudes, neither positive nor negative changes have prevailed.

Whatever else we conclude, no one questions that this picture leaves much room for improvement. I believe that considerable improvement is possible, provided that we are ready to collaborate with educators in studies that have such improvement as their objective. These would be studies in which the school environment would be changed in ways that psychological theory predicts would be accompanied by more positive outcomes. In such studies we would shift our stance from evaluation of desegregation as it happens to active innovation of more promising programs.

I want to tell you about some first steps in this direction. Let me begin my description with a personal experience. For some years I have been doing research on cooperating interracial groups. One of these days I hope to find out what determines the level of

respect and liking that develops in such groups. In 1970 I employed a school teacher named Patricia Wiser as a research assistant. I soon discovered that she had taught English in inner city schools in Milwaukee and Nashville and that she had made a practice of dividing her classrooms into small learning teams. She had them compete with each other for whatever prizes and privileges she could devise. She did this primarily for motivational reasons. Many of the students did not get very excited about English literature, but they did come alive when their contributions to a team report counted toward the score their team earned in the classroom competition. Moreover, they checked up on one another's progress and helped each other to be sure that no one was holding the team back.

I saw considerable similarity between her experiences and the behavior of the interracial groups I had been studying in the laboratory. And I was interested from another point of view. In the traditional classroom, in which the teacher asks questions of individual students, higher achieving students compete for the teacher's attention and praise, while lower achieving students try to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible. Minority students from segregated schools are very likely to come into desegregated schools with achievement handicaps. For this reason a classroom conducted in the traditional manner is not at all suited to their needs.

All of this led to the idea of continuing the research on cooperating interracial groups in a classroom setting. Together with Russell Weigel of Amherst, who was then at Colorado, Pat Wiser and I took the idea of cooperating interracial teams into two newly desegregated Denver schools, a junior high and a senior high. We

found ten English literature teachers who were willing to teach one of their class sections by a new method and another by the traditional procedure. We then got permission to assign students to these 20 sections without their knowledge of what was transpiring. This made it possible for us to balance the interracial composition of the classes without creating the atmosphere of an experiment. One of each teacher's pair of sections was randomly assigned to the team-teaching condition. Students in that section were divided into five-person teams with one black, one chicano, and three anglo members.

Pat Wiser helped the teachers devise curriculum units that adapted the regular content of the course to group assignments--things like a group analysis of a play with each group member handling a part of an oral report to the class. As expected, the students developed team spirit and started helping one another. One effect of this was that considerable cross-ethnic and interracial helping took place and there was a corresponding reduction in cross-ethnic and interracial conflict. Laggards in a group were urged by their teammates to complete their part of the team's assignment.

Results were measured after one semester in the senior high and after a school year in the junior high. They were modest. Among the anglos we found a significantly greater respect and liking for chicano classmates as well as a significantly higher proportion of friendship choices as indicated by higher frequency of inclusion of chicanos in lists of persons with whom students would like to work or would include in future social gatherings. However, that was the extent of the difference between our team classes and the traditional classes. In retrospect, we believed we learned things

that should improve the impact of the team procedure a second time around. For example, we had kept the same team compositions throughout the experiment. A result of this we didn't foresee was that some teams came to anticipate defeat and gave up in the class competition. It was clear, after the fact, that we should have reconstituted the teams several times each semester.

At about this time I began to learn of others who had begun to work with learning teams in desegregated schools. I now know of four such groups. The cumulative results of their work hold considerable promise for both academic and attitudinal outcomes in desegregated schools. Let me try to give you a brief account of what is in progress.

One of the groups works out of the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins and was first headed by David DeVries. Each of the learning teams in DeVries' procedure includes students from all levels of achievement in the classroom. Once a week, the teams hold an academic competition covering the material they have studied that week. The competition is arranged so that students with equivalent recent achievement records compete with each other and is in the form of a graduated series of 3-person games, referred to as a tournament. A student draws a card with a question on it and earns a specific number of points if he answers the question correctly. His answer may be challenged by one of the two other pupils at his table. They win points if their challenge is correct and lose if it is not. A key feature of all of this is that the lowest-achieving child on a team, because he is competing against other low-achieving children, can bring his team as many or more points as the highest achiever on the team.

Of course, the important thing is what this does to the behavior

of the children during the week before the competition takes place. This period becomes the time for team practice. That means drilling all members of the team--for example, on fractions if that is what the next competition will be about. Needless to say, the lower-achieving students on a team will need more of the team's attention to get ready. From the team's point of view that makes sense. The idea, after all, is to get everybody ready for the tournament.

When I learned of DeVries' innovation, I was reminded of some earlier work by Robert Hamblin, the sociologist then at Washington University in St. Louis. He and his collaborators, Hathaway and Wodarski, had rewarded student groups in experimental classrooms either in terms of the average test score of the three highest scorers in the group or in terms of the average of the three lowest scores in the group. When they rewarded on the latter basis they observed a significant increase in achievement. The reason was that the teams had done the appropriate thing, namely, they had concentrated on bringing up the academic performance of their members whom they guessed were likely to have the lowest scores--in other words, the lower-achieving students. It seemed that what DeVries had done in his multi-level classroom tournaments was to recapture this bit of group logic in a form more palatable to parents and teachers.

When DeVries left Hopkins for his present post at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensborough, his place was taken by Robert Slavin. Slavin continued to work with the DeVries' procedures, but he also introduced a somewhat simpler version of them. The weekly tournament competition in the DeVries' procedure required special materials and, hence, represented something of a barrier to easy application. To minimize this barrier Slavin changed to

a different kind of competition based simply on mimeographed weekly quizzes. He retained the potential for low achievers to make the greatest contribution to the score of their team by comparing the students' quiz scores, not to the class average, but to the scores earned by a group of six students similar in previous achievement level. Since the teams know about this method of awarding points on the basis of past achievement level, it continues to make sense for them to prepare the low achievers on their team to do as well as possible.

While this was going on at Hopkins, Elliott Aronson and his co-workers at the University of Texas were employing learning teams in the newly-desegregated schools of Austin. The focus of this group was on improving the self-esteem of minority students. In their learning teams each member received only one section of the total material on which they all were to be tested. This put the team members in the position of teaching one another. For example, if a biography is being studied in a social studies class, the biographical material is divided into as many parts as there are team members. One student might get the material on early childhood, another on school years, and so on. All of the children with the same part of the biography--for example, the early childhood section--first get together to study and become experts in their materials. They then return to their teams and teach it to their teammates. The effect of this, as you can see, is to equate classroom participation. The reticent lower class child is brought out of his shell while the middle class eager beaver is held in check.

After the team members have finished teaching one another, everyone in the class takes a test over the entire material and is graded as an individual. Unlike the Hopkins and Colorado procedures,

no team score is computed and hence there is neither a group reward nor competition among groups. However, because the team members are dependent upon one another, a student is rewarded with social approval as well as inner satisfaction for his part in the team's preparation. Aronson has continued this line of research at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

I am sure I have said enough to give you an idea of the way learning teams are beginning to be used in desegregated classrooms. I don't have time to describe the equally exciting work of two other groups. One is led by David and Roger Johnson of the University of Minnesota, the other by Schlomo Sharan at Tel Aviv University. Both employ procedures not unlike those we used in Colorado. Their emphasis is on assigning group tasks to learning teams. The task may involve group planning, group decision, division of labor, team critique of members' work, and so on.

What about the results? School achievement has been measured in nine studies of learning teams in desegregated classrooms. In six of these the classrooms with learning teams achieved significantly better than control classes. In three studies there were no differences. Race relations have been measured also in nine studies in desegregated classrooms, with positive results in eight of them. The measure most frequently employed in these studies has been the proportion of cross-racial friendship choices. Self-esteem has been measured in three studies with positive results in all three.

Research on interracial learning teams is still in its infancy and I am not suggesting that we take the effectiveness of such teams in enhancing the constructive outcomes of desegregation as having been fully demonstrated. Rather, my point is that this research

illustrates an innovative attempt at school desegregation that is long overdue.

I would like to stress the point that innovative methods are needed not only with respect to classroom procedures but also in the modification of teacher behavior. Norman Miller and Harold Gerard have shown that pessimistic expectations by teachers about minority students' achievement are associated with lower achievement by minority students in their classes. Other studies also support the importance of teachers' attitudes for minority achievement. However, to date, there has been a regrettable tendency to assume that the remedy for this is to change teachers' attitudes by such techniques as human relations workshops. Given how hard it is to change adult racial attitudes and how unaware teachers are of the behavior they display toward minority children, this may well be the wrong approach. My guess is that a far more effective procedure would be, first, to identify those teacher behaviors that influence minority student achievement, then to make teachers aware of these behaviors, and finally to give them practice in using only those whose effects are positive. In the process teacher attitudes might change, but let's not assume that this is a necessary prerequisite.

In concluding I can only make explicit the obvious. Desegregation remains one of our best hopes for closing the gap between our stated equalitarian ideals and our mistreatment of black Americans. Many opportunities will occur in the future for social scientists to assist both in furthering desegregation and in enhancing its constructive outcomes. With a quarter-century behind us, none of us who accepts these opportunities need feel the terror that Kenneth Clark felt in 1951 as he collected data in the rural outposts of

Clarendon County, South Carolina, wondering which of the oncoming cars might carry the lynch mob. Nor need we bear the indignities suffered by Isador Chein in Richmond in 1952 as he endured the anti-semitic taunts of the attorney for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Nevertheless, what remains for scientists to do for the success of desegregation is as badly needed as what they did. May we be worthy of their legacy to us.